

National Aeronautics and Space Administration  
Headquarters  
Washington, DC 20546-0001



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Reply to Attn of: Office of the General Counsel

To: NASA Civil Service Employees  
From: General Counsel  
Subject: Political Activities of Federal Employees

With the local and congressional election approaching, Agency employees may wish to participate in election-related activities. This is a brief summary of the restrictions imposed on Federal employees with respect to political activities; that is, activities directed towards the success or failure of a candidate for partisan political office or a partisan political party or group. The Hatch Act has long restricted the political activity of executive branch employees. In 1993, Congress amended the Hatch Act, allowing most Federal employees to take an active part in political management or in political campaigns. However, some employees continue to be prohibited from engaging in partisan political activity, and all employees face at least some restrictions on their conduct.

#### General Schedule and Non-Career Employees

Most employees may participate in most types of political activity on their own time. This category includes General Schedule, Senior Level, Schedule C, and non-career Senior Executive Service (SES) employees. Specifically, these employees may:

- Assist in voter registration drives.
- Express opinions.
- Contribute money.
- Attend fundraisers.
- Join or attend rallies, meetings, parties, and clubs.
- Sign nominating petitions.
- Campaign for or against candidates or questions.
- Make campaign speeches.
- Distribute campaign literature.

However, some activities remain prohibited. Specifically, employees may not:

- Use official position to interfere with an election.

- Solicit, collect, or receive political contributions (unless both individuals are members of certain kinds of labor or employee organizations and the one soliciting is not a subordinate.)
- Knowingly solicit or discourage political activity of someone who has business with the Government.
- Engage in political activity while on duty, while wearing a uniform or official insignia, or using a Government vehicle.

The restriction on conduct of political activities while on duty prohibits, among other things, the wearing of campaign buttons and the placement of posters in work areas. It does not prohibit bumper stickers on privately owned vehicles parked in the Headquarters garage.

#### Career Senior Executives, Administrative Law Judges, and Board of Contract Appeals Members

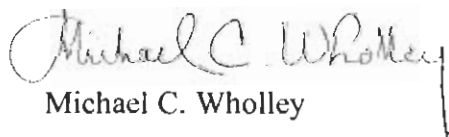
Career SES, along with Administrative Law Judges and Board of Contract Appeals Members, still may not engage in partisan political activity. This is a significant restriction on permissible political activities. This category of employees may:

- Attend political rallies and meetings.
- Join political clubs or parties.
- Sign nominating petitions.
- Campaign for against referendum questions, constitutional amendments, and municipal ordinances.

However, most political activities are prohibited. Specifically, employees in this category may not:

- Campaign for or against candidates or slates of candidates in partisan elections.
- Make campaign speeches for candidates in partisan elections.
- Solicit or receive contributions for partisan political organizations.
- Collect contributions for, or sell tickets to, political fundraising functions.
- Distribute campaign material in partisan elections.
- Organize or manage partisan political rallies or meetings.
- Hold office in partisan political clubs or parties.
- Circulate nominating petitions in partisan elections.
- Take part in deliberations or proceedings of party conventions or convention committees.
- Register voters on behalf of a particular political party.

This brief summary of Hatch Act restrictions is not intended as a substitute for individualized advice. In the event of any uncertainty on the application of the Hatch Act, employees should contact the Office of the General Counsel or their local Chief Counsel Office.

  
Michael C. Wholley